

Pennsylvania's Mentoring Program

Mission

One mission of the Pennsylvania Civil Rights Committee is to develop, oversee, review, and provide program maintenance for a successful Pennsylvania mentoring program.

Vision

Diverse and successful mentoring partnerships that provide a connection to experience, knowledge, trust, diversity, and improved personal and professional work environments.

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Introduction

The history of mentoring can be traced back thousands of years. Men and women plotting the paths of their lives and careers have long sought the wise and experienced counsel of a confidant, one whose judgment was valued and lasting.

Webster defines a mentor as a wise and trusted counselor, a teacher, and an experienced individual who helps an employee grow and succeed. The relationship requires the investment of time and self, giving but receiving as well. Mentoring offers the chance to expand the horizons of others by providing insight and guidance based on one's real-life work experiences. Mentoring is available to *ALL* employees. It is a trusted relationship whereby freedom of expression and opinion is honored yet never compromised.

To become a mentor you must evaluate your entire career. Perhaps your first day on the job was full of apprehension, anxiety, and the desire to do well matched against the fear of failure. Then slowly but surely you began to "learn the ropes" from those who trained you. Eventually



you gained the confidence and expertise necessary to accomplish the job. A mentor provides that extra opinion needed to gauge one's desires and hopes in order to succeed.

Each of us needs guidance periodically throughout our careers. If a mentor's advice proves beneficial even to one employee, the process is a success, benefiting the mentor, protégé and the agency.

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a partnership between an experienced employee (the mentor) and an employee who desires additional personal or professional knowledge (the protégé). The mentor is willing to guide, support, answer questions, provide referrals, and share experiences with the protégé. The partnership is based on trust and confidentiality.

Trust, friendship and honesty are key ingredients to mentoring. It is, after all, a situation to foster career development. Whether contact is made in person, by telephone or by mail, each is encouraged to contact the other.

The mentoring relationship will last a short or long period of time, as long as it remains viable and beneficial. Changes of circumstances such as transfers, retirements and reassignments keep mentoring relationships under constant reevaluation. Such changes may present emotions that range from excitement to resentment, joy to anger, optimism to cynicism. Knowing when and how to fine-tune the mentoring relationship is the key to making it work.

Why be a Mentor or a Protégé?



- To reach your full potential, both professionally and personally
- To share knowledge and experiences
- To build listening and communication skills
- To build understanding of gender, racial, and ethnic diversity
- To improve the work environment

Mentoring is NOT:

- A replacement of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Civil Rights, Career Counseling or other personnel programs
- Special treatment, preferential promotion or sponsorship
- Top-down, driven by the mentor. The partnership is driven by the needs of the protégé and the protégé makes decisions

What do Mentors do?

- Provide career counseling to protégé
- Provide encouragement and guidance on training and developmental issues
- Serve as a role model on how to conduct oneself in the professional world
- Be reasonably accessible
- Recognize and acknowledge progress and professional growth of the protégé
- Encourage and convey a sincere belief in a protégé's ability to succeed
- Provide advice, constructive feedback on the protégé's actions and products, formal and informal instruction
- Introduce the protégé to people who can assist in accomplishing goals
- Provide suggestions for the protégé to demonstrate her/his skills
- Be sensitive to cultural and gender differences
- Refer the protégé to his/her supervisor, EO Counselor, Civil Rights Coordinator, Employees' Assistance Program, or Human Resources as appropriate when other counseling is needed
- Maintain confidentiality
- Have fun



What are the Protégé's Responsibilities?

- Actively participate.
- Be open to constructive criticism
- Do a self-assessment: What skills does he/she need to get? Where does he/she want to go? Clarify goals. What are the objectives for the interactions?

- Recognize that this program is only a supplement for his/her own hard work and abilities, not a substitute.

What can Mentors and Protégés Discuss?



- Past experiences
- Goals
- Plans
- Skills-present and desired future
- Career paths
- Useful problem solving strategies
- Struggles and successes
- Expectations from the mentoring relationship
- Preferred ways of interacting
- Agree on how the relationship will work. Outline expectations about the frequency and type of contact.

Conclusion

Mentoring takes dedication, time, honesty and sincerity. Once a relationship has been formed, effort to keep it on track is demanding yet rewarding.

Even the best of efforts are not enough at times and the relationship must be severed for the good of the mentor, the employee and the agency. But instead of the end, a new beginning could appear, and again, the cooperation of all three ingredients is required; employee, mentor and agency. The employee can develop the relationship with a new mentor and the process is again revived.

Management stands to gain or lose depending on the attitude of the mentor. If, for instance, a disgruntled employee becomes a mentor for a new employee, the whole outlook of the relationship will reflect negatively upon the agency and hence upon the new employee. Management commands the large stake in the process and it is to their advantage to impart honesty and fairness in the broad scheme of things.

The mentor is held in esteem, one that can be depended on for straightforward advice regardless of its potential effects. The advice will provide a foundation for sound decision making by the employee. After all, this is what mentoring is all about.

